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About the monthly Water Level bulletin

March Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term March average:

Great Lakes Basin	118%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	134%
Lake Superior	122%
Lakes Michigan-Huron	93%
Lake Ontario	138%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

Volume 5, Number 4 **April 7, 1997**

Large Runoff to Upper Lakes Anticipated

High Water Levels Pose Serious Threat of Spring Flooding

Water levels on all of the Great Lakes except Lake Superior continued to climb during March. Levels have reached an elevation where they pose a very serious threat of flood and storm damage to shoreline properties during this spring. While the risk of damage is greatest along the shores of Lakes Erie and St. Clair, it is a cause for concern along all the Great Lakes' shores.

Last month, Lake Erie had the biggest jump in the levels, and the average for the month was just nine centimetres shy of the previous March maximum, which occurred in 1986. By the beginning of April, both Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair were about 70 cm higher than average.

The beginning of April levels on the other lakes were also well above average, by 24 cm on Lake Superior, 53 cm on Lake Michigan-Huron and 33 cm on Lake Ontario.

Further rises in the levels of the lakes are forecast for the next few weeks. Surveys of the snowpack have indicated that an above average amount of water exists in the form of snow over much of the drainage basins of Lakes Superior and Huron, which could lead to a large spring runoff to these lakes. An extremely wet spring could raise the levels on Lakes Superior, Huron, and St. Clair very close to the record highs of 1986-87, and it could push Lake Erie's level above previous record highs.

If precipitation amounts over the next several months are near average, then levels of all the lakes will remain below previous record highs.

Record Outflows Slowed Lake Ontario Level's Rise

For the second consecutive month, the outflow of Lake Ontario in March was a record high for the month. The outflow in March was maintained as high as possible by the International St. Lawrence River Board of Control without causing flooding downstream of Cornwall, Ontario, or disturbing the ice cover in the river. The high outflow has helped slow down the seasonal rise in Lake Ontario's level, in spite of the continued very high inflow from Lake Erie and Lake Ontario's own basin. However, the lake's level still increased by 14

centimetres between the first and last days of the month.

The high Lake Ontario outflow to date is estimated to have lowered Lake Ontario by 70 centimetres, in comparison to the level that would have occurred had the seaway and project not been built.

The Board is expected to direct some reductions in the Lake Ontario outflow during the Ottawa River freshet, which is anticipated to occur sometime in April. Flow reductions are necessary in order to avoid serious flooding in the Montreal area.

March Outflows From the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term March average:

Lake Superior	127%
Lake Erie	136%
Lake Huron	117%
Lake Ontario	137% *

* Record High

Note: These figures are preliminary.

Public Meetings

The annual public meeting of the International Lake Superior Board of Control will take place on the evening of Tuesday, June 17, at the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control will hold its evening public meeting in Brockville, Ontario, at the Royal Brock Hotel on Wednesday, July 2.

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